

St. George Parish Council
Meeting Minutes
Feb. 25, 2018
6:30 pm

Parish Council Meeting Start Time: 6:33 pm

Members Present: Donna Boivin, Maureen Fuest, Maureen Goss, Helen Keiser-Pedersen, Val LeShane, Joe Nelly, Brooke Sheldon, Tony Sicignano, Francine Wainer, Bill White, Fr. Stephen, Fr. Faron, Deacon Bob and Peer Ministers: Michael Campanelli, Libby Heller, and Meg Reynolds

Members Absent: Margot Burkle, Colleen Burkle, Amanda Loban, Cara Moore, Peer Minister Hannah Plaziak

Guest: Debra Falvey

Tony opened by welcoming new council members Maureen Fuest and Valerie LeShane. He also introduced Bill White as our new trustee.

Reflection: Deacon Bob

Approval of Minutes: Fran motioned to accept the minutes of the January 28, 2018 meeting; Donna seconded. Minutes approved.

Pastor's Report: Fr. Stephen brought the new members up to date on the OLM property, which included various options explored over the last two years:

- Purchase the property from the Sisters of Mercy outright
- Extension of the lease which is now on a month to month basis
- Look for another existing building to house the school
- Build a new school
- Merge with St. Mary's

Fr. Stephen explained that a Vision Committee was appointed and a feasibility study was also conducted to consider building a new school. However, after looking at all of the options, it was felt that all avenues were exhausted and the decision was made to merge OLM with St. Mary's – now St. John Bosco Parish.

Fr. Stephen indicated that the way in which the message about the merger was communicated was not handled properly; however, both Fr. Stephen and Fr. Dan from St. Margaret's feel that the right decision has been made to merge both schools. The inter-parochial (STREAM – Science, Technology, Religion, Engineering, Art and Math) school (ECSA – East Shoreline Catholic Academy) will have three parishes sponsoring it. Once the teachers are selected, they will begin to train extensively in the spring and summer.

An informational meeting was held on February 15th at St. Mary's. There was a decent showing of parents. Improvements will be made within the school starting in the summer. Enrollment for ECSA opens on March 1, 2018. There will be an "early bird" registration period for current families before opening up registration to the general public.

Maureen Fuest indicated she attended the informational session and was extremely excited about the new STREAM program.

Council members raised some questions about the hierarchy at OLM. It was explained by Fr. Stephen that as a parish school, the ultimate responsibility of the school lies with the pastors. The School Board assists the pastors in an advisory capacity. The Vision Committee is an Ad Hoc committee and was commissioned to perform the legwork and explore various options available. The Vision Committee reports back to the School Board, who in turn, makes recommendations to the pastors.

Fr. Stephen indicated that information will eventually be placed in the church bulletins about the open enrollment for ECSA and an article will be submitted to the local newspapers as well.

Fran and Fr. Stephen commented on the article that appeared in the local papers and New Haven Register regarding our involvement with Haiti. It is important to have positive press and to let the community know what we are doing for Haiti. Perhaps it is time that we reach out to the press when we have good news stories to share.

Tony referenced the Apparent Project - the individuals who make the beads and pottery in Haiti. He indicated efforts are underway to bring some of the items here to sell in order to support the Apparent Project mission. Both Tony and Libby met with the 7th and 8th grade CCD classes to bring in empty cereal boxes to be brought over to Haiti in June when the Peer Ministers go. The boxes are used to make the beads.

Fr. Stephen informed the Council that priests attend regular Deanery meetings. Prior to the pastoral planning process, there were 17 deaneries. Our deanery included 5 towns: East Haven, Branford, North Branford, Guilford, and Madison. Since the pastoral planning process, the districts have been redrawn and there exist only 7 Deaneries now within the Archdiocese. We are Deanery 7 and that now includes: East Haven, Branford, North Branford, Guilford, Madison, North Branford, New Haven, West Haven, Orange, Milford & Woodbridge.

The deaneries are now looking at how to get parishes to the right size by having critical mass vs. empty seats. Critical mass builds excitement within a parish. How do we build up the critical mass and evangelize throughout the deanery? What steps should be taken to reach this goal?

Fr. Stephen indicated that we are in good shape financially. There will be a positive report for the 2017 year. However, the Archdiocese has decided to reorganize the way in which they receive money from each parish. Fr. Stephen explained to the Council that each parish has always paid a Cathedralium, which is a certain percentage of a parish's income that helps to finance the larger structure of the Archdiocese. Parishes without schools paid 11% of ordinary income (5.5% for overall archdiocesan ministries and 5.5% toward the other catholic schools). Parishes that did have schools did not have to pay the 5.5% toward schools because they already provide a subsidy toward their schools. Going forward, there will be no distinction between parishes that have schools and those that don't. There will be a graduated percentage instead based on the following:

- The first \$250k of ordinary income will be assessed at 6%.
- The second \$250k will be assessed at 9%.
- The third \$250k will be assessed at 13%
- The fourth \$250k will be assessed at 18%
- Anything over \$1M will be assessed at 20%.
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Income at the parish level is no longer just the weekly ordinary income, but any collection will be figured into this formula, as well as any gifts and bequests. The only income not assessed will be income from events, i.e., fundraisers, carnival, or money received specifically for programs, i.e., religious education fees, etc.

Matthew 25 will not be included in the assessment since what we take in is given back out to the community and is not considered revenue of the parish.

St. George is looking at a significant amount being sent upstream. More information will be explained to parishioners in the bulletin and in the Annual Report.

John Michael Talbot is coming to St. George on September 21, 2018. If anyone is interested in helping to organize, contact Bonnie McManamy.

Fr. James Mallon Conference – Tony and Donna went to the conference on Feb. 15th which was held in New Hampshire at the Immaculate Conception Church. The conference was centered around Fr. Mallon's book that the Council and office staff read over the summer – Divine Renovation.

Tony was impressed with everyone there. All groups who attended the conference were catholic. There were several groups there who worked with Immaculate Conception when they decided to adopt the Alpha Program into the church. Tony indicated the conference was very rigid in its structure and had to be timed. Fr. Mallon gave three talks and a Q&A at the end of the day. Everything we read in the book during the summer was discussed at the conference.

Donna indicated the following items that Fr. Mallon touched on:

- In today's culture, we have a culture of minimalism and that we feed people who have no hunger
- Vision is a picture of the future that produces passion in us
- People today have lost the capacity to dream about what can be. You cannot fake passion.
- If you can't fake passion and nothing is producing passion, then you will not have good vision.

Tony indicated Fr. Mallon spoke about his personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Fr. Mallon stated:

- You have to engage your heart, not just your brain. When your heart is engaged, that is when you are in a relationship with someone.

Tony indicated the music that was played was prayer. Every song played referenced Jesus, Our Lord, God, Me. Other points made:

- Must praise God; not sing to each other.
- You can't evangelize until you have the Holy Spirit come to you.
- If you don't know Jesus, then you won't want to know more about him.

Fr. Mallon's Senior Leadership Team has 4 people on it and they meet once a week for 2-4 hours.

There are 4 non-negotiables for the Senior Leadership Team:

- Unanimity of vision
- Balance of strengths (this should be intentional)
- Healthy conflict and trust (a movie keeps us interested because of conflict and drama; politics is conflict without trust)
- Vulnerability

Within the leadership team, it is understood that it is safe to disagree because you will not be judged. You can push back and challenge and then walk out with the best ideas. Fear is the biggest barrier in moving forward with a program.

Once a leadership team is in place, an invitation is extended – ALPHA is the invitational point.

From there, Connect Groups form - 20-30 people. Fr. Mallon has 14 groups currently – seniors, teens, young adults, etc. You need to meet the groups where they are currently at both mentally & spiritually, i.e., the young adult group meets in a bar and this is perfectly acceptable.

Fr. Mallon indicated that the first mistake that was made when starting out was that the invitation was only sent to Catholics – non-Catholics should be included as well because in the end, this initial invitation brings you to your own basic faith. From there, it grows into your own personal relationship with Christ.

The first Alpha session should be 60 people or less. The Alpha New England Group would then come out to train.

Groups:

- Discipleship Group – 4-12 people – primary focus is learning, catechesis. They are a temporary group.
- Connect Groups – 20-30 people – Fellowship/Community is primary; catechesis is secondary. They meet every 2 weeks and are a permanent group.

Fr. Faron expressed concerns about what happens if Fr. Stephen leaves? The new pastor may not want Alpha.

Next steps:

A question was raised as to who would constitute the leadership team? It was indicated at the conference that the church staff usually runs the Alpha program, not the pastoral council

Should we move forward, the next step would be to contact Alpha.

They, in turn, would contact the Archdiocese in order to announce the program and the training to all the churches. The training would take place at St. George. Everyone who comes here would have a fee of \$25 and it would be an 8-hour training day. Attendees from St. George would be free.

Deacon Bob indicated that St. Ambrose has participated in Alpha. Tony is suggesting that we contact all the churches on the green and invite them to come since this is all about your personal relationship with Christ and you as an individual person – what you then learn, you take back to your church.

It was suggested that we take some time to digest what we heard at the meeting and email Tony with any questions. He will then follow up with the Alpha Group.

Closing Prayer: Joe Nelly

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm

Meeting Dates: 3/18/18, 4/29/18, 5/20/18, and 6/24/18

Respectively Submitted,
Francine Wainer